

R E P O R T

OF THE

MASSACHUSETTS COMMITTEE

TO PREVENT THE ADMISSION OF TEXAS AS A SLAVE STATE.

THE Massachusetts State Anti-Texas Committee, having accomplished the purpose intended by its organization, so far as its own action is concerned, now desires, before it be dissolved, most respectfully to submit to the public, and particularly to those who have favored the enterprise, a brief account of its proceedings, together with some views of the present aspect of public affairs, in connection with the great question which it has been its duty to consider.

At a meeting of citizens called without regard to party, and held at Cambridge on the 21st day of October, 1845, it was decided, *after a deliberate interchange of sentiment concerning the state of the Texas question*, that a large Committee, drawn from all parties of the Commonwealth, should at once be organized, whose duty it should be to procure as general an expression of the voice of the people as possible, in season to remonstrate against the sanction, by the Congress of the United States, of certain odious features of a Constitution about to be submitted by Texas, prior to her admission as a State into the Union. The features referred to were deemed objectionable, because they established the institution of domestic slavery on a permanent foundation, in a vast territory, where as yet it exists only to a limited extent, and because, by being presented to the Congress of the Union for approbation, its consent to accept them, made the whole people of the Union responsible now and forever, for the evil consequences, as well as the disgrace that would ensue.

Although it was a very late moment for action, scarcely five weeks remaining before the assembly of the bodies by which the matter was to be decided, the individuals pointed out by the vote of this meeting lost no time in entering upon the duties assigned to them. They had as few doubts of the propriety of the proposed effort as they had of their own obligations to perform it, aside from any considerations of its probable success. They at once sent forth a form of remonstrance, unexceptionable in its language, and remarkable for the simple expression of its purpose. They published in connection with it an address, setting forth the reasons why it should be signed. They solicited the aid of all

who felt an interest in the subject, to promote the circulation of the paper, and to procure signatures among their friends and neighbors. They addressed the reverend clergy in the most respectful manner, deeming the point at issue not unworthy of regard as a moral question of deep importance to the welfare of the nation. They applied for assistance to those known to be gifted in a high degree with the power of persuasion over their fellow citizens. They asked of others, whose influence was supposed to be extensive, both within and without the limits of the State, such an exercise of it as might usefully further the enterprise in which they were engaged. In short, upon a review of the whole ground, the Committee are not conscious of having omitted any act which, in the brief interval of time allotted to them, could in their judgement have been adopted with a reasonable prospect of securing a compensating result. Of the precise extent to which these exertions have been successful in swelling the number of remonstrants it is difficult for the Committee to judge. The number coming within their own observation, exceeds thirty-six thousand, but in addition to these, many names were sent from the towns in which they were collected directly to the Representatives at Washington. A very considerable array of signatures has also been procured in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, as well as in other parts of New England. The aggregate will not fall short, in all probability, of one hundred thousand signatures. all gathered in the brief space of six or seven weeks. The attempt must then be regarded as having been highly successful, to record the voice of a multitude in support of the principles of free government, and in opposition to the spread of a most fatal error in American Institutions. The fact that it was made in a moment of overwhelming discouragement; without adventitious aid of any kind; with no personal or political ends to be served by forwarding the movement; and in the face of objections from the faint-hearted, the despairing, and the treacherous, is well calculated to show the depth of the feeling which lies at the bottom of it. It proves to all those who see in the future only darkness, that a profound regard for a principle of fundamental importance in morals and politics, is not every where among the people of the free States made to yield to the adversity of the hour; and that attachment to the interests of freedom, does not waver in their breasts with a single unfortunate issue, in a contest that must be eternal.

For it ought to be remembered that this is the first effort which has been made to concentrate the voice of any great number of persons against the single institution of domestic slavery in Texas, without connection with any other question. The grounds of opposition to the annexation of that territory have heretofore been various. This is simple, unequivocal, morally just, and politically sound. It is against slavery in Texas that this effort has been directed, because the people of that country demand its recognition and its sanction by the people of the Union. In this respect the Committee have done little more than to follow in the path pointed out by the Legislature of Massachusetts at the close of its late session. With extraordinary unanimity certain resolutions were adopted after the decision by Congress upon the general subject of annexation became known, two of which, as bearing upon the present movement, are here inserted :

Resolved, That the annexation of a large slave-holding territory at the will of the government of the United States, with the declared intention of giving strength to the institution of domestic slavery in these States, is an alarming encroachment upon the rights of the freemen of the Union, a perversion of the principles of republican government, a deliberate assault upon the compromises of the Constitution, and demands the strenuous, united and persevering opposition of all persons, without distinction, who claim to be the friends of human liberty.

Resolved, That the right to hold men as slaves, was conceded by the Constitution of the United States to be a matter exclusively belonging to those States in which that right was acknowledged, upon the understanding, however, that the power which it gives, should be exercised strictly within those limits; but now that it arrogates the control of millions of freemen, living beyond them, and puts at hazard the predominance of the principles of liberty in America, it justifies the adoption on their part, of a systematic policy of counteraction, by lawful and constitutional means, even though that policy should ultimately bring on the downfall of slavery itself.

The Committee regret to have it to say, that from the course marked out by these resolutions, so far as they may be said to have followed it by their attempt at united action, there has been manifested some disposition to retreat, in a quarter where it was least expected. The reasons for this have been embodied in certain letters addressed to them by the Hon. Abbott Lawrence, and the Hon. Nathan Appleton, which have been placed before the public. As these letters have met with the most unqualified approval of many leading newspapers of both the great political parties in the commercial cities, it is proper to consider them as explaining the views of a considerable class of individuals. And whatever may have been the intention of the authors, they have been so generally understood and justified as abandoning the ground heretofore assumed in Massachusetts in the resolutions already quoted, that the Committee are reluctantly compelled to reregard them as going to that extent. The position thus assumed by gentlemen of known influence and standing, has lost to the cause the assistance of a highly respectable but not very numerous portion of the Whig party. And it may be feared that it gave encouragement to the overbearing violence with which the measure was at last pushed through the House of Representatives. The sorrow for that loss has however been materially alleviated by the manifestation in another quarter of a far more favorable disposition than had been anticipated. A very considerable number of the Democratic party in the country towns have given in their signatures with cheerfulness and cordiality. The same spirit which has refused to ratify the condemnation of John P. Hale in New Hampshire, for honestly resisting the aggressions of slave-holding power last year, is living in the breasts of the true democracy all over New England, and will show itself in action whenever the occasion shall call for it. It has evinced its disposition in the present instance in spite of all the resistance of party organization. If there were no other result, whatsoever to be attained by this movement, the discovery of this fact alone would be abundant compensation to the Committee for all their labor.

It should however in justice to them be observed that they have in the course of their proceedings endeavored as far as possible to rise above all mere distinctions of party. They have neither asked nor expected any assistance that was not tendered to them without regard

to the source from which it might come. The Committee most gladly bear witness to the zeal which individuals of all parties have manifested in sustaining them. From Whigs, particularly those living in the country, and from the Whig press out of the city of Boston, they have had powerful aid. From Democrats in the same region, they have received numerous signatures in spite of their press. The other parties have not disappointed their expectations in either sense, and besides giving their labor, they have manifested a most praiseworthy spirit of conciliation and of moderation. The general result has exceeded the anticipations of the Committee. At the outset they had no reliance but upon the RIGHT. They had no personal inducement to offer, in order to secure assistance, no followers of the camp for the sake of the spoils. They made no appeals to base passions or sordid motives. They counted on no aid that was not given at some personal sacrifice solely for the support of sound principles. They sought to dictate to no one, and to threaten none. Their appeal was made to the heart and head of every citizen, and then they left him to answer it as he thought best. Some have indeed coldly shaken their heads, and answered words of fear and discouragement. But an infinitely greater number have responded most cordially to the call. That response, made under the circumstances that attended it, is most encouraging, because it is so perfectly spontaneous. One other circumstance deserves particular notice, in connection with the details of this movement. The disposition manifested within the Committee has been the very best. The first experiment yet made of uniting persons of very opposite shades of political sentiment, with prejudices against each other, growing out of past conflicts of opinion, in acting upon the single point of opposition to slavery in Texas has been eminently successful. A spirit of harmony, and yet of energy, of zeal, and yet of moderation, has animated the most ardent, equally with the least adventurous. The consequence has been A CORDIAL UNION OF EFFORT. It must be evident to all that under present discouragements nothing else can avail to carry on the contest with slavery with any prospect of success. It is the dissensions among the citizens of the free States, and not their want of strength, which give all the triumphs of the slaveholders. What has been done once may be done again at a better moment. The knowledge that difficult times may bring with them the true spirit of union will not be without its use in rightly guiding the strength of the opposition that must henceforth be waged with unceasing earnestness against the aggressive temper of the owners of slaves.

Passing from this topic, the Committee will now review very briefly the series of events in connection with the fate of the remonstrance. A large proportion of the signatures within the State having been transmitted to them, it was deemed best that the care of conveying them to Washington should be assumed by a portion of their body. The Hon. Henry Wilson, and J. G. Whittier, Esq. were selected for the duty, and they punctually performed it by placing their charge safe in the hands of the Representatives of Massachusetts. The remonstrances were not presented to Congress in one mass. It was deemed best that each of the Representatives should offer those coming from his own District. Hence it will follow that the Journal of the House will

scarcely furnish an adequate record either of the labors or the success of the Committee. It will nevertheless supply what but for their exertions would never have appeared, the most unquestionable evidence to future ages of the resistance made to the last by Massachusetts against the most fatal inroad upon human rights that has ever yet been executed in America. It will preclude hereafter all possibility of justifying the future aggressions of slavery by any plea, drawn from a tacit assent to this.

The Congress opened with the delivery of the Message of President Polk, the particulars of which are too well known to be detailed here. On the ninth of December, that is, as soon as possible after the organization of the standing committees, Mr. Douglass, a Representative from Illinois, made the regular motion for the distribution to them of the various parts of the Message. Among the rest, "so much of that document as relates to the admission of new States to the union," was referred on his motion, to the committee on the Territories, a committee of which he was himself the chairman. Thus far the movement appears to have been regular. The committee named had been carefully selected by the Speaker for the subject it was to consider, being made to consist of five slave-holders, Mr. Lynn Boyd, of Kentucky, Mr. Graham, of North Carolina, Mr. Jones, of Tennessee, Mr. Price, of Missouri, and Mr. Young, of Kentucky—three of them Democrats, and two Whigs, and four from the free States, Mr. Douglass, of Illinois, Mr. Dillingham, of Vermont, Mr. James Thompson, of Pennsylvania, and Mr. Rockwell, of Massachusetts—three Democrats, and one Whig, all but one, the last gentleman named, in favor of the admission of Texas, and a majority being slave-holders, to overrule all doubts about the sanction of slavery. But on the very day this distribution was made to the committee thus constituted, Mr. Adams, of Massachusetts presented a remonstrance against the admission of Texas as a slave State, coming from the town of Denmark in New York, and moved its reference to a select committee of one from each State. This motion appears for a moment so far to have embarrassed the preconcerted arrangement, that the slave-holders were obliged to interfere with a new measure to prevent its adoption. Mr. Houston, a Representative from Alabama, was fortunate enough to be in time with a motion to refer to the committee on the Territories, which motion, by the rules of the House, taking precedence of the other, was put first by the Speaker and carried. Mr. Adams then presented many other remonstrances of the same kind, all of which followed the direction given to the first, and thus ended the proceedings of that day.

But however well disposed the committee on the Territories might be, to drive the project through, there is reason to believe that they were not so well pleased with the prospect of a reference of a remonstrance with a hundred thousand names, the first division of which had succeeded in working a channel for itself into their quarters. Although political men may become hardened, they always look with aversion, that partakes of instinct, upon any necessity of utterly defying the voice of considerable bodies of voters. This was a responsibility to be avoided if practicable, and the way to avoid it was for the committee to be called together and to act immediately before any more re-

monstrances could possibly come in. The reference of the Message had been made on the ninth. The committee on the Territories was ready to report on the morning of the 10th. Mr. Douglass then reported a preamble and two Resolutions—the first admitting the State of Texas on an equal footing with the original States in all respects whatever—and the second, as if intended to mark the grossly inconsistent nature of the proceeding, granting to the new State *two* Representatives, without any evidence of its having a population exceeding that of Delaware, or Florida, or Arkansas, which have but one. Such being the resolutions, however, Mr. Douglass moved a suspension of the rule, in order that they might have a first and second reading, which was carried, and then he moved that they be assigned for consideration to Tuesday the 16th. Here Mr. Rockwell, of Mass., the single dissenting member of the committee, made a motion to refer the consideration of these Resolutions to a committee of the whole House on the state of the Union. He made it in time, as several members of the House bore witness, and his motion had precedence of the other by the rules of the House, but the same Speaker who had the day before found it in order to give the motion of Mr. Houston precedence over that of Mr. Adams, now did not become sensible of the motion of Mr. Rockwell until he had put that of Mr. Douglass to the House, after which he decided that it had come too late.

It should be borne in mind throughout this proceeding, that the committee, in their haste to report these Resolutions, must have taken for granted that Texas had complied with the conditions prescribed in the joint resolutions of the last Congress, to be performed prior to the annexation of that country. They could not have considered the nature of the form of government which she had presented for approbation as being “republican,” because they allowed themselves no time to do so. They did not take the trouble to explain to which among the original States, enjoying by no means equal advantages, the equality of footing upon which Texas is placed was to be understood to apply, whether to the free States or the slaveholding States. Neither did they show a reason, why in the very teeth of the second section of the first article of the Federal Constitution, Texas should have *two* Representatives, without any proof of adequate numbers required or rendered. All these considerations, immensely important as they are, were entirely overlooked by the committee for the good reason to them that a moment’s delay would have invited discussion; and this *would have let in a way for the remonstrants to make themselves heard*, which was not the cue either in committee or in the House.

A report of a committee upon any subject referred is usually regarded as a discharge from the further consideration of it. Of course, the remonstrances that had found their way to the committee on the Territories, were to be considered as having been reported upon in the very measure which treated them with neglect. But although these were thus summarily disposed of, the great mass of them yet remained behind, not having been presented in season for the haste of the committee. Mr. Adams, upon presenting some of them the same day that the resolutions were reported, the 10th, moved, in consequence of that report, a reference to the committee of the whole on the state of the

Union, and here Mr. Lynn Boyd, a slave-holder from Kentucky and a member of the committee on the Territories, interposed, and moved that they be laid upon the table—which motion takes precedence, and it was adopted. On the next day, the 11th, Mr. Adams, upon presenting more of the remonstrances, moved a reference to a select committee of one from each State, and here again Mr. Lynn Boyd, repeated his motion to lay on the table, which again took precedence, and was again adopted.

The cries of thousands and tens of thousands of free citizens of this republic, having been thus hushed in sleep, the next step in the process was to gag those of their Representatives. When the resolutions came up regularly for consideration upon the day specified, the 16th, Mr. Felix Grundy M'Connell, a well known Representative from Alabama, moved their reading and the previous question in the same breath. By this proceeding, sustained by a small majority of the House, they passed through the third stage without debate. There remained the final question of passage, upon which Mr. Rockwell of Massachusetts, was fortunate enough to get the floor. He made a thorough exposition of the character of the whole proceeding, and then moved a recommitment of the Resolutions to the committee on the Territories, with instructions providing that slavery should not be acknowledged in the Constitution of Texas. There was a moment of pause at this unexpected obstacle. Then the previous question was moved with the design of cutting off the motion to recommit by taking precedence of it, but here the Speaker most unexpectedly refused to follow the cue that was given him. He decided that the previous question, if adopted, would apply to the motion of Mr. Rockwell, and bring up at once to be acted upon by yeas and nays the issue, slavery or no slavery in Texas. This was the great point which the friends of Liberty in the free States would have desired. But it was a question which the majority were afraid to meet. And rather than record their names, yea or nay, on that naked issue, they actually preferred to stultify themselves. After having sustained the decision of the Speaker, on the point of order respecting Mr. Rockwell's motion, they now changed their minds, and ninety-nine to ninety-three, decided to condemn their Speaker, and their own previous judgment, in order to get rid of it. Having thus reversed his decision, they made the previous question apply to the Resolutions themselves, and thus forced them through their last stage, by a majority made up of ALL* the slave-holders, both Whig and Democrat, and of Democrats from the free States with only three exceptions, which should be named. They are Mr. Preston King, Mr. Wood, and Mr. Wheaton, all of New York.

The Resolutions having thus been forced through the lower House at the sacrifice of every principle that marks a free government, were immediately sent up to the Senate. Here they were read and referred to the committee on the Judiciary. That committee, though constructed upon a different principle will be found to have been as carefully prepared for its duty as the committee on the Territories of the House. It is composed of Mr. Ashley, of Arkansas, Mr. Berrien, of Georgia, and Mr. Westcott, of Florida—three slave-holders, two of them Democrats, and

* Mr. J. G. Chapman, of Maryland, may possibly be an exception.

one Whig, and Mr. Breese, of Illinois, and Mr. Webster, of Massachusetts, from the free States—all but the last named in favor of the Resolutions. Of course they were reported without amendment—and on the 22d day of December, a day memorable to New England as the anniversary of an event of a far opposite influence on the history of mankind, they were considered and acted upon. Here too, Massachusetts interposed a last remonstrance by the voice of one of her Senators. The action of this Committee has not been in vain if it shall have stimulated in any degree the Representatives of the old Commonwealth in both branches of the Federal Legislature to a consistent opposition to the last. Let what will be the consequences of this measure, Massachusetts has then no share in it. She has done her part, honestly, conscientiously, manfully. She has striven to be true to the principles of the Pilgrims and of the Revolution. The majority of the Senate which passed the act contains thirty-one names, including every slave-holder,* and every Democrat present, but it does not contain, any more than did the majority of the House of Representatives, the name of a single citizen of Massachusetts.

Eight Senators did not record their names at all, viz. Messrs. Cameron, John M. Clayton, Crittendon, Jaragin, Johnson, of Md., McDuffie, Pearce and Semple.

Thus then has this most important step been accomplished. The extension of slavery indefinitely in the South-west is now the declared policy of the Federal Government. As if to mark this more surely, immediately after the passage of these Resolutions, a slave-holding Senator from Florida rose in his place, and proposed that measures should be forthwith commenced to acquire from Spain, the great centre of all slave-holding now remaining out of the limits of the United States, the island of Cuba. And all remonstrance against this system has not only been disregarded, but absolutely denied a hearing. And this is yet called a free country! If the House of Representatives can act as it has done in this one instance why cannot it do the same in all? Why will they not do the same in the case of Cuba, and in any similar question hereafter? It is not pretended that the subject of the present remonstrance was one upon which Congress could not legitimately act. Yet it is treated just as those have been to which that objection has been raised. Some persons may aver that they expected nothing more, but are they aware that in thus taking credit for their own sagacity, they are really proclaiming the decay of all that has given lustre to America in the annals of mankind? And it is **SLAVERY THAT HATH DONE THIS**. Slavery has corrupted liberty in her fountain seat. Slavery has hardened the hearts of this generation of political leaders, so that they heed no warning, excepting it should be a miracle from heaven. Slavery has infused its pestiferous venom into the veins of the body politic in the free States to such an extent that they see not what mere instruments of tyranny it is making of their people. There is no other direction in which to look for the cause of the neglect into which the principles of the Revolution have fallen, except the preponderance of a policy which makes the perpetuation of slavery the pole star of its course.

* Mr. Thomas Clayton, may be an exception.

Henceforth then is a new epoch in the United States. The compromises of the Constitution have been deliberately violated—and for the future that system is to be pursued above-board, which has heretofore been sedulously covered up, however industriously promoted, to wit, the system of extending the area of human slavery. To this every question of policy, and every national interest is to be made to bend. By this is every act of the general government to be regulated. It is slavery that will provide great armies and navies, insist upon claiming the whole of Oregon, or else give it up, that will encroach perpetually upon Mexico, and even hazard the hostility of the civilized world. Whatever decision may be made upon any or all of these points will be the decision of men looking to their property in slaves as the index of their action. This is the solemn truth, and the sooner this sad state of things comes to be thoroughly understood, the more likely will it be that some really useful effort shall be set afoot in the way of counteraction.

The Committee having accomplished all within the sphere of its power that it could do under the authority conferred by the meeting at Cambridge is now dissolved. Such are the honest differences of opinion among its members as to the expediency of any particular course of measures, that it would not be wise or judicious to attempt further any common system of action at the present time. Neither is the adoption of such in the existing condition of public opinion at all necessary. But although the Committee separate, it will not be to relax their exertions, or to recommend any relaxation of effort to their friends. They entertain no shadow of doubt of the necessity of making the resistance to slavery paramount to every other consideration of a political nature. The fault they have to find with the great parties which naturally divide the country, is that they vary from the policy of the slave-holders, in making the subject of Slavery secondary to all party interests, instead of reversing the order. In a slave-holding country, no matter what may be the divisions of parties, the support of slavery by all is understood to be a matter of course. Why should it not be so with freedom? Why should those who value human rights, and the perpetuation of their own highest privileges in this life to their latest posterity be less vigilant, less active and less united than those who act from less creditable motives? The Committee do not hesitate earnestly to enjoin upon their fellow citizens, whatever they may do, never to forget that now Slavery is a matter of intense anxiety, as affecting their welfare, and demands their active opposition. It is no longer the exclusive concern of the States in which it may be found, as has been hertofore pretended. It wields the power of the nation to perpetuate itself. The same instruments that now sustain it, may be made by the will of the people to strike it down. The people must again and again be appealed to so long as a hope shall remain that they may yet restore the principles for which their fathers contended.

It is not then a time to listen to those who pretend on the one side, that opposition to slavery is treason, or on the other that it comes too late to do any good. Such counsels certainly weak, and possibly treacherous, have been heard long enough. They paralyze the strength of freemen. So far from it the Committee, whilst they would not recommend a departure from moderate counsels, do most earnestly exhort to the main-

tenance of the unconquerable will which never palter with its principles or heeds the craven whispers of despair. The future is not without abundance of openings for hope. For however well established the slaveholding policy may appear at this moment—however well grounded may be the note of victory sounded by the governor of South Carolina at what he is pleased to call “the greatest of all triumphs,” the acquisition of Texas, these victors stand upon a volcano, and they know it. They have by the violence of their course chosen to cut off all the sympathies which would naturally attach to their condition. They have been pleased to insult the friends whom they might have conciliated, to destroy their rights, to abridge their privileges, to weaken all the safeguards of their liberties, and even to ridicule their principles for the purpose of supporting themselves in wrong doing. More than all, they have insisted upon forcing them into the extension of a most iniquitous institution, at war with the spirit of the age and of American freedom. Let them not then be surprised that they have excited determined opposition and roused a never-ceasing resistance.

The field is then wide enough for all to work in as they like, *if they will only work*, and that without any absolute necessity of general combination at the present moment. Though the greatest of all objects be *union*, it may be obtained as well by absence of collision as by positive agreement. Above all, it ought to be well understood that this is not the moment to put off armour and indulge in ease. The contest about Texas has been fought and lost; the Constitution trampled under foot, and the spirit of Liberty is driven from her natural home, but unnumbered fields yet remain, each of which should be the subject of even a greater contest than the last, until either the institution of Slavery shall be overthrown, or else the Sampson of the North, intoxicated by the cup of worldly prosperity and enfeebled by his dalliance with the harlot, shall ultimately perish amidst the crumbling of the edifice which he had made for his protection.

Charles Francis Adams, Boston,	Caleb Stetson, Medford,
J. Ingersoll Bowditch,	James M. Robbins, Milton,
Henry I. Bowditch,	Charles Allen, Worcester,
Wm. I. Bowditch,	Elihu Burritt,
Geo. Bradburn,	Wm. B. Calhoun, Springfield,
Wm. Brizham,	James Fowler, Westfield,
George S. Hillard,	Charles Sedgwick, Lenox,
Wm. Lloyd Garrison,	Wm. H. Channing, Roxbury,
Edmund Jackson,	Samuel E. Sewall,
Francis Jackson,	Wm. Jackson, Newton,
Ellis Gray Loring,	Henry Wilson, Natick,
John G. Palfrey,	William A. White, Watertown,
Wendell Phillips,	Stephen C. Phillips, Salem,
John Pierpont,	E. R. Hoar, Concord,
Simon G. Shipley,	Elisha Huntington, Lowell,
Henry B. Stanton,	Amos Faresworth, Groton,
Charles Sumner,	James G. Carter, Lancaster,
James M. Whiton,	N. B. Borden, Fall River,
Elizur Wright,	Andrew Robeson, New Bedford,
Jas. Freeman Clark,	John J. Whittier, Amesbury,
Samuel Downer, Jr.,	Joshua Coffin, Newbury,
Samuel G. Howe,	